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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE



HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

TUESDAY, June 24, 1941

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QUESTION BOX

: Why check guage on steam pressure canner?	:	Answers from scientists at
: How clean pressure canner?	:	various State experiment
: Canned vegetables lose vitamins on standing?	:	stations.
: Vegetables lose vitamins in water as they cook?	:	

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Out of the mailbag and up for reply today are more questions. A couple of the questions today are about pressure canners. Other questions are about losing vitamins. The answers today come from scientists at various State experiment stations who have been investigating these particular subjects.

The first question comes from a housewife who is worried about her steam pressure canner. She writes: "Many of the vegetables I canned last year spoiled. I couldn't understand it because I followed directions from the Department of Agriculture exactly, as I have done other years. My neighbor says maybe the pressure guage of my canner is out of order. Could this possibly be the trouble?"

Very possibly, answer scientists at the Nebraska Experiment Station who made a special investigation of the guages on pressure canners in farm homes in Nebraska. They found that many of the guages farm housewives were using were faulty. Even the guages on new canners were not always accurate. These scientists advise checking your pressure guage every year before canning season. You can send the guage back to the manufacturer for checking. Or you can ask your State College or your county home agent to help you. Some State colleges and some home agents now have master-guages for checking guages on pressure canners. By the way, you want to be sure that the valves, pet cock, and thermometer of your canner are in good order, too.

The second question is this: "What is the right way to clean a pressure canner?"

The answer comes from the Nebraska Station. And the answer is: Clean your pressure canner exactly as you would clean any other metal cooking kettle except that you keep the pressure guage out of water. Wash the canner with hot clean suds. Then rinse with hot clear water. And dry thoroughly. Give the cover, rims, safety valve and petcock all a careful cleaning. The safety valve may need cleaning with silver polish to prevent rusting and sticking. You want to be most careful that the safety valve is always clean and smooth so it won't leak or stick. After you have polished it, be sure to rinse and dry it thoroughly.

Here's another point about keeping your canner clean. Housewives often complain that pressure canners have an objectionable odor, or give food cooked in them a "pressure-cooker taste." You can prevent this "pressure-cooker taste" and odor by washing the cooker carefully and then putting it away with the cover off. You can lay a light paper over the top to keep out dust. But you want enough air to reach the inside of the cooker to keep it fresh. Air needs to reach the inside of the cover, too. So when you put the cover on the shelf, turn it upside down.

By the way, the same rules for cleaning and storing apply to the new pressure saucepans many housewives are using for everyday cooking. Keep them clean and free from rust and sticking. Put them away with the lids off.

Now here's a letter asking about vitamins in canned vegetables. A housewife wants to know if green beans canned a year ago have lost any vitamins during the year of standing on the shelf.

The answer comes from the Montana Station. Scientists there found that green beans canned and kept for only 6 months and then reheated for serving had lost most of their original vitamin C; had lost half their original vitamin B; but had lost scarcely any of their vitamin A.

So canned green beans standing on the shelf a year won't supply you with enough vitamin C to count, but they will still add some vitamin A and vitamin B to

your meals. Of course, the fresher vegetables are, the more of the original vitamins they have. Most canned vegetables gradually lose food value, particularly vitamin C, as they stand.

Last question--another one about vitamins. A housewife wants to know if vegetables really lose much food value in the water they cook in.

Scientists at a number of State experiment stations have found a big loss of vitamin C in the cooking water. This is natural enough, because vitamin C is soluble in water. A study of vitamin C in turnip greens at the Texas Station recently showed that after cooking, more of the vitamin C may be in the cooking water than in the greens that go to the table.

You can see why nutrition scientists have been urging housewives to cook vegetables in a small amount of water, and then to use the water either by serving it on the vegetables or in soup, sauce, or gravy. It may be easier to drain the vegetables and let the cooking water go down the sink, but it is a great waste of valuable vitamins. And that's all the questions for today.

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